CITY OF LOS ANGELES
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
YOUTH COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, July 14, 2026
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Los Angeles Trade Technical College

Multipurpose Room F5-105 Building, 2215 S. Grand Ave. Los Angeles, CA 90015

AGENDA

1.	Call to Order/Roll Call	
2.	Declarations of Conflict of Interest	
3.	Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items	
4.	Welcoming new WDB staff	Hannah Lee

ACTION ITEMS:

5.	Consideration of the Minutes of April 7, 2026	Victor Reyes

ADVISORIES/DISCUSSIONS/PRESENTATIONS/REPORT-BACKS/UPDATES

6.	YouthSource Center and HireLA Evaluation Interim Findings and Recommendations Presentation	Christian Geckeler and Lea Folsom, SPRA
7.	3rd Quarter WIOA and HireLA Performance Presentation	Bryson Gauff
8.	Peer Homeless System Navigation Program Presentation	Daniel Millan and Danielle Guillen, The Guillen Group
9.	LA County Youth@Work Allocation Verbal Update	Lisa Salazar
10.	Next Meeting: October 27, 2026	
11.	Adjourn	

Youth Council Committee:

Chair: Armando Loza, Esther Dabagyan, Jaleesa Hazzard, Lindsey Heisser, Jim Lancaster,

Carrie Lemmon, Victor Reyes, Steve Zimmer, Youth Advisors: vacant

PUBLIC INPUT AT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETINGS

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Workforce Development Board
City of Los Angeles

4.

DATE: July 14, 2026

TO: Workforce Development Board (WDB)

FROM:

SUBJECT: **Welcoming new WDB staff**

REQUESTED ACTION:

BACKGROUND:

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND:

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

No Attachments Available

Workforce Development Board
City of Los Angeles

5.

DATE: July 14, 2026

TO: Workforce Development Board (WDB)

FROM:

SUBJECT: **Consideration of the Minutes of April 7, 2026**

REQUESTED ACTION:

BACKGROUND:

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND:

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

- Item 5 - DRAFT Minutes_WDB_Youth_Council_Comm_04.07.2026
- ADOPTED_Minutes_WDB_Youth_Council_Comm_04.07.2026

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
YOUTH COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2026
3:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.
LOS ANGELES TRADE TECHNICAL COLLEGE
Multipurpose Room F5-101 building
2215 S. Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90015

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Armando Loza, Esther Dabagyan, Jaleesa Hazzard, Jim Lancaster, Carrie Lemmon, Victor Reyes, Kahlil Hayes (Youth Advisor)

1. Call to Order/Roll Call
   Chair Armando Loza called the meeting to order at 3:15 p.m. after the CEA confirmed the presence of a quorum.

2. Declarations of Conflict of Interest - None

3. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items - None

ACTION ITEMS:

4. Consideration of the Minutes of February 24, 2026
   Motion to approve by Jaleesa Hazard/Seconded by Jim Lancaster
   Vote: Unanimous approval

ADVISORIES/DISCUSSIONS/PRESENTATIONS/REPORT-BACKS/UPDATES:

5. 2026 – 27 Draft Annual Plan Presentation

   Donny Brooks, EWDD Chief Grants Manager, provided background on the Year 27 Annual Plan, noting it is the final plan prepared by EWDD before the department's July 1 consolidation into the Community Investment Department.

   Elizabeth Macias of the EWDD Planning and Research Unit presented a condensed, youth-focused overview, noting the full plan is available on the department website. She reviewed the workforce strategies guided by the *People, Industries and Jobs Report*, provided a regional economic overview, and shared that LAEDC is preparing an updated report. Elizabeth also highlighted the Year 27 priorities and key accomplishments from the first year of the 5-Year Plan, including the launch of pilot sector coalitions, the Horizon 32K Opportunity Youth Plan, the YouthSource System Redesign, youth homelessness initiatives,

expanded regional collaborations, and the Know Your Rights Fellow Workforce Pilot Program.

Donny Brooks presented the proposed 2026–27 Annual Plan, including estimated revenues, funding allocations totaling $95,526,100, WIOA formula funding and proposed distribution, Youth Program revenues, funding highlights, Innovation Fund projects, budget updates, and supporting program activities. He noted that public comments on the Annual Plan would be accepted through May 2, 2026, via the EWDD website.

Carrie Lemmon noted a discrepancy in Table 3 the proposed WIOA distribution 52.8 million but the amount of revenue shows 54.458 million is missing over 1 million in funding to be allocated.

Gerardo Ruvalcaba noted an error on page 16, and said that general funds will be available.

WDB Youth Advisor Zaynah Robb submitted a written public comment that the number of homeless that are housed should be tracked not just how many were referred to resources.

6. Department Consolidation Plan Presentation

Abigail Marquez, General Manager of the Community Investment Department, provided an overview of her background with the City of Los Angeles and the department's ongoing restructuring. She explained that the effort integrates four departments to build a more inclusive economy while maintaining separate adult workforce programs aligned with the department's broader mission. Ms. Marquez also reviewed the department's strategic goals, outlined its three divisions, addressed overlaps in youth programming, and explained the new organizational structure.

Lisa Salazar, General Manager of the Youth Development Department, outlined plans to preserve youth expertise and elevate youth voice within the new division while maintaining a strong focus on serving young people. She explained that YouthSource programs will remain separate from workforce programs due to distinct funding requirements and noted that housing youth programs within a dedicated office reflects the department's commitment to strengthening services and connections for youth.

Chair Armando Loza thanked Abby and Lisa for the presentation.

Esther Dabagyan asked about aligning the youth work experience programs to the areas of need.

General Manager Marquez stated that she will commit to intentional integration. The YouthSource RFP is an example, the FamilySource RFP will follow.

Gerardo Ruvalcaba, Assistant General Manager of the Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD), stated that the department is intentionally implementing its sector strategies and emphasized that the departments' strong history of collaboration provides a solid foundation for the integrated effort.

Jaleesa Hazzard asked what is the role of LAUSD throughout this?

Ms. Marquez responded that they have relationships with their FamilySource Centers, and that they have LAUSD collocated.

Tammy Ortuno, Mayor's Office emphasized the importance of strengthening the tax base to support expanded services, noting that many children are experiencing homelessness and that there is an opportunity to grow and better address community needs.

Ms. Marquez stated that while data and metrics have been discussed, additional time is needed to assess the "no wrong door" approach. She emphasized that this assessment is critical to measuring outcomes and demonstrating the department's overall impact.

WDB Youth Advisor Kahlil Hayes commented that youth are lacking knowledge in financial literacy.

7. Youth Workforce Opportunities for the Upcoming Games Discussion

   Hannah Lee reported on workforce development opportunities related to upcoming major sporting events, including collaboration with the LA Sports and Entertainment Commission and the World Cup. She noted plans for three worksite events and discussions about funding a pilot project to create youth employment opportunities. Ms. Lee also shared ongoing partnerships with LA84, The Alliance, and LA Trade Tech to expand youth workforce and career pathway programs in the sports and entertainment industry.

8. Next Meeting: July 14, 2026

9. Adjourn: Victor Reyes Motioned to adjourn at 5:04 p.m./Seconded by Esther Dabagyan. Motion carries unanimously.

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
YOUTH COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2026
3:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.
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Multipurpose Room F5-101 building
2215 S. Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90015

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Armando Loza, Esther Dabagyan, Jaleesa Hazzard, Jim Lancaster, Carrie Lemmon, Victor Reyes, Kahlil Hayes (Youth Advisor)

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8. Next Meeting: July 14, 2026

9. Adjourn: Victor Reyes Motioned to adjourn at 5:04 p.m./Seconded by Esther Dabagyan. Motion carries unanimously.

6.

DATE: July 14, 2026

TO: Workforce Development Board (WDB)

FROM:

SUBJECT: **YouthSource Center and HireLA Evaluation Interim Findings and Recommendations Presentation**

REQUESTED ACTION:

BACKGROUND:

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND:

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

- Item 6 - LA YWS Evaluation Interim Findings and Recommendations Briefing Presentation
- Item 6 - LA YWS Evaluation Briefing Paper

LA Youth Workforce System Evaluation

Interim Findings and Recommendations Brief

Presentation to the WDB Youth Council

July 14, 2026

SPR Social Policy Research Associates

Introductions/SPR Team Leads



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Agenda

1. Evaluation Overview
2. Notable Successes
3. Preliminary Recommendations
4. Questions and Discussion



Evaluation Overview



About the Evaluation

- The City of Los Angeles Community Investment Department (CID) hired SPR to evaluate the Youth Workforce System (YWS)
- For this project, the YWS includes:
  - The WIOA Youth Program as operated through the City's 14 YouthSource Centers (YSCs)
  - The Hire LA's Youth (HLAY) work exposure and experience program, operated through the 14 YSCs and 7 additional CBOs (excluding the CaliforniansForAll/Youth Service Corps-funded portions of HLAY, whose structure is largely directed by the State)
- The evaluation is grounded in an equity and Positive Youth Development lens, examining service access, service quality, participant experience, and outcomes



Evaluation Goals

1) To describe the YWS' implementation and participant- and system-level outcomes

2) To examine the ways in which the YWS has addressed the design elements and recommendations identified in previous system redesigns, evaluations, and strategic planning documents

3) To make recommendations for the upcoming four-year procurement cycle around system improvements



Data Collection

Literature review
- LA evaluations
- Statewide evaluations
- City strategic planning documents

Staff/Stakeholder Interviews
- City staff
- Hire LA Steering Committee members
- Staff from 14 YSCs and 21 HLAY programs

Youth Interviews*
- 15 YSC Advisory Council members and other YSC participants
- Additional interviews still underway

Youth survey*
- 296 HLAY applicants
- 121 HLAY participants
- 36 WIOA youth participants
- Additional surveying still underway

Administrative data*
- Youth WIOA data from CalJOBS for the last four program years
- HLAY program data from the last four program years

**Data collection continuing through at least mid-July. Numbers represent data collected at the time of the briefing paper. Findings therefore are preliminary.*



Evaluation Deliverables

Evaluation Design Report

Annotated Bibliography

Progress Reports on Data Collection Activities

Interim Findings and Recommendations Brief

Final Evaluation Report



Notable Successes of the YWS

The YSC Service Delivery Model is Well-Defined

As of the 2022 YSC RFP, the YWS was well-defined. It included:

Program Requirements	Service Delivery Model
Organizational requirements	Outreach & enrollment
Target populations	Case management
Eligibility criteria	Participation length
Performance expectations	Service delivery
	Youth voice & leadership
	Work experiences & employer engagement
	Outcome tracking & follow-up

*This well-defined system does not necessarily mean there has been consistent implementation across all providers.

Extensive Enrollment and Service Delivery

Reach

- From July 2022 to May 2026 the YWS enrolled:
  - Approximately 5,597 WIOA youth (211 with 2+ enrollments)
  - Approximately 9,614 HLAY program youth (2,196 with 2+ enrollments)

Early Benefits

- Preliminary survey findings suggest some youth reported improvements in:
  - Work readiness
  - Goal setting
  - Connections to education and training

The final report will examine:

- Characteristics of enrolled youth
- Challenges to enrollment
- HLAY application process barriers
- Opportunities to improve access



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Cross-System Partnerships are Essential

- Interviews and LA-related literature suggest that the YWS has strong partnerships with:
  - LAUSD
  - community colleges
  - County and City agencies
  - local service providers
- These partnerships support recruitment, enrollment, and service delivery through staff co-location and formal agreements
- There are still areas for partnership growth, especially around employers and specific service types like housing

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Opportunities for Youth Voice have Expanded

- Planning documents have emphasized the need for youth to have opportunities to provide feedback and engage in leadership
- The 2022 RFP emphasized taking a youth-centered approach, including creating YSC Advisory Councils and having youth representation on the Hire LA Steering Committee
- Interviews and survey data suggest that formal mechanisms of youth voice have expanded in recent years and youth have expressed appreciation for these opportunities
- There are further opportunities to expand youth voice and to strengthen the ways youth voice is incorporated and to show youth how their input affects decisions



Preliminary Recommendations



1. Shifting Attention Towards Service Delivery, Engagement, and Barrier Removal

Observations	Potential Solutions
• Interviews with staff identified potential limitations around continuing to engage youth & having them complete services • Reasons included: needing income; barriers (transportation, child care); psychological factors (e.g., confidence); a programmatic focus on enrollment over service delivery due to performance pressures	• Refocusing attention on strategies for reducing barriers • Increasing funding and reducing restrictions around supportive services • Supporting/encouraging training around positive youth development strategies • Defining and establishing interim outcome measures to capture progress towards barrier abatement and youth empowerment



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2. Reorienting the YWS to Start with Sector Knowledge and Career Pathways

Observations

YWS career services do not begin with defined priority sectors that can anchor career exploration, work experiences, and employer and educational partnerships

This is a well-documented challenge with past documents (e.g., Fields and Soto) pointing to the need to identify priority sectors but among other factors, may have gotten stalled due to a lack of employer partnership development (especially centralized at the City-level), a disconnect with the adult system sector focus, and competing initiatives

Doing so would also align the YWS with the recent changes to the adult workforce system (5-Year Path Forward) and plays into the restructuring the led to CID



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2. Reorienting the YWS to Start with Sector Knowledge and Career Pathways

Potential Solutions

Re-orient the YWS to start from the City's identified priority sectors (5-Year Path Forward)
Leverage sector specialists and business services representatives and coordinate with other aligned systems rather than building a parallel system
Scaffold sector approach into differentiated pathways, so that exposure to work, work experience, and training varies by age, school status, work readiness, and barriers
Build youth voice into the sector pathway design so that pathways reflect youth interests
Include explicit assumptions about City-side role and provider-side requirements, naming them in the next cycle, rather than leaving these up to providers
Continue to lead with work-and-earn hook, while connecting initial work experiences to later sector-aligned opportunities



3. Determining Hire LA's Functions and Implementing a Tiered Services Model

Observations



HLAY effectively engages youth, serving as a universal entry point to the YWS, a source of income for low-income youth, and an opportunity for early work exposure

Benefits of work experience programs identified in external research that are not fully captured by existing performance measures include: improvements in job readiness, social skills, and college aspirations, and reduced criminal activity



3. Determining Hire LA's Functions and Implementing a Tiered Services Model

Observations Cont.

Work experience quality can vary (service jobs, etc.)	Limited opportunities to connect to or advance along career pathways	Delayed program contract executions slows funding
No handoff to a career pathway	Limited coordination between HLAY and WIOA youth programs	Potential solutions like the tiered service model have not been implemented



3. Determining Hire LA's Functions and Implementing a Tiered Services Model

Potential Solutions

- Reintroduce a tiered system of service delivery, based on age, education, interest, readiness, etc., with clear service tier definitions and expected levels of involvement at each tier (e.g., larger percentage at tier 1 that is more general and smaller at tier 3 that is more career-specific)
- Develop HLAY program performance measures that match its intended functions and populations
- Create a common identifier to link HLAY and WIOA youth data



4. Creating ways for City and YWS Providers to Increase Collaboration

Observations	Potential Solutions
• The 2022 RFP defines many components, but the model is decentralized, relying on providers to design and implement program elements • This provides flexibility but creates variation across providers and potentially duplicates effort (i.e., each one investing in similar tools)	• Increase collaboration across providers to share approaches • Centralize employer recruitment and some aspects of participant recruitment to reduce provider burden and (for participants) to promote more equitable access across communities • Develop citywide standardized tools and procedures (e.g., IDPs, assessments, checklists, etc.) and delivery associated TA



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5. Finding Ways to Increase Funding to Providers, Especially Staff Wages

Observations	Potential Solutions

• Interviews suggest that funding levels make it challenging for providers to:
  • Offer sufficient supportive services
  • Collect and track data
  • Engage employers
  • Provide livable staff wages
• As rooted in the literature: low wages hurt staff retention which hurts program quality
	• Identify sources of additional funding, especially other leveraged funding sources, by the City for supportive services
	• Make contracting procedures easier and more seamless, prioritizing timeliness to eliminate administrative burden and free up resources and the flow of funding, and consider up-front funding
	• Reduce provider burden around data collection



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Questions and Discussion
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City of Los Angeles Youth Workforce System Evaluation

Interim Findings and Recommendations Brief

7/9/2026

Prepared for:

City of Los Angeles Community Investment Department

Prepared by:

Christian Geckeler
Lea Folsom
Skye Allmang
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Introduction

The Youth Workforce System (YWS) within the City of Los Angeles (City) provides workforce system services through a set of YouthSource Centers (YSCs) and the Hire LA's Youth (HLAY) program, which operates through many of the City's YSCs and a set of community-based organizations (CBOs). This service delivery system is complex and involves multiple program providers, funding sources, services for youth of varying ages, and a variety of oversight groups and strategic planning efforts. The providers of the City's YWS are re-procured on regular four-year cycles, with the newest cycle set to begin in July 2027. To prepare for this newest cycle, the City has hired Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to conduct an evaluation of the YWS, including services funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and City and County-funded portions of the HLAY.[1] Grounded in an equity and Positive Youth Development lens, this evaluation examines service access, service delivery, service quality, participant experience, and outcomes across geographies and priority youth populations.

How to Interpret this Brief

This brief is intended to share interim findings from the evaluation with key City stakeholders and make recommendations for the City to consider when developing its YWS procurement process. Because data collection and analysis are ongoing for some components of the evaluation (which are noted in the data sources below), the findings presented here vary in their level of evidentiary support. Findings based on completed data collection and analysis efforts should be considered higher-confidence results, while findings derived from ongoing data collection or analysis should be viewed as preliminary and subject to refinement. To complete its evaluation, SPR will produce a final evaluation report that will further clarify and expand upon the findings shared in this brief with additional data and analysis and which will be structured to help address the evaluation's larger set of research questions (related to inputs/system structures, enrollment, service delivery, and participant outputs and outcomes, and system-level outcomes). The final report will also include a logic model describing the current YWS structure and a full, annotated bibliography identifying promising practices.

The structure of this brief is as follows. It first describes several notable successes of the YWS, including the design and delivery of both WIOA youth and HLAY programs and YSC operations. It then lays out five broad recommendations that include:

[1] This evaluation excludes the CaliforniansForAll/Youth Service Corps portion of HLAY, which was previously evaluated by SPR in 2024.

1. observations about the system, highlighting gaps and shortcomings, grounded in SPR's data collection and analysis activities that examine YWS implementation and ways in which the YWS has addressed previous system recommendations, and
2. potential solutions for addressing the issues observed.

The brief also categorizes these potential solutions into near-term actions that can be incorporated into the City's upcoming procurement cycle, ongoing system improvements CID and providers may consider alongside the rollout of the next funding cycle, and longer-term strategies related to funding, policy, data, and partnerships that may take additional investment and consideration.

This brief draws on multiple data sources, which SPR identified, collected, and has begun to analyze over May and June of 2026. These include:

- **A literature review** identifying local and national best practices alongside a summary of findings from earlier Los Angeles evaluations and strategic planning documents. A bibliography of sources is included in Appendix 1 and SPR's review of these sources is incorporated into the analysis below.
- **Interviews** with City staff, HLAY steering committee members, and staff from all 14 YSCs and 21 HLAY program service providers including at the 14 YSCs and seven additional CBO locations. Data collection is complete and analysis is ongoing.
- **Interviews** with 15 youth advisory council members and YSC participants. Data collection is ongoing and preliminary findings are represented below.
- A **survey** of 453 current and recently exited YSC (n=36) and HLAY participants (n=121), as well as HLAY applicants (n=296), collecting feedback on service quality, satisfaction, and career readiness. Survey data collection is ongoing and survey findings presented in this brief are based on preliminary descriptive analyses of respondent feedback. Given the exploratory purpose of the survey and the relatively small number of respondents across some participant groups, outcome analyses and statistical significance testing were not conducted.
- **Administrative data** on WIOA youth and HLAY program participants over the four-year procurement cycle. Analysis is ongoing and findings should be considered preliminary.

Background on YWS Reorganization

An important contextual factor for this evaluation is that the City's YWS, and the workforce system more broadly, recently underwent a significant organizational transition. "Effective June 29, 2026, the Community Investment for Families Department, Economic and Workforce

Development Department, Youth Development Department, and Department of Aging consolidated to form the Community Investment Department (CID).

This transition presents a meaningful opportunity to more fully integrate a youth-centered lens into the YWS, strengthening the system's ability to implement developmentally appropriate, holistic strategies that support young people's broader needs and long-term success. At the same time, through this transition, the City is rolling out its newly procured adult workforce system providers and working to reinforce workforce development priorities to maintain alignment with WIOA performance expectations and sustain a focus on career readiness and youth employment outcomes.

Notable Successes of the YWS

While the central purpose of this brief is to provide recommendations for improvements to the YWS and the procurement process for its YSCs, it starts with several successes of the program. These are notable for their own sake, and they help to frame the recommendations below.

The YSC Service Delivery Model Appears Well-Defined in the RFP

The 2022 Request for Proposals (RFP) issued by the City for YSC operators includes a detailed model that these operators are supposed to follow across all aspects of service delivery. This model establishes consistent parameters for program evaluation and describes service design elements related to program quality. For instance, the RFP provides specific details about the following major aspects of service operations:

- **provider organizational requirements**, including the eligibility criteria that proposer organizations must meet, emphasizing their overall operational capacity and ability to manage grants of this size and nature;
- **target populations**, with definitions for each of the eight priority groups (e.g., youth experiencing homelessness or runaway youth,[2] foster youth, opportunity youth,[3] etc.);
- **participant eligibility criteria**, including criteria such as age and school status; and
- **performance expectations,** including federal, state, and local performance measures that providers will need to track and report.

In addition, the RFP lays out detailed expectations regarding YSC program design requirements, including how services must be structured and delivered and how YSCs are to:

- conduct outreach, screen, and conduct intake of youth;
- structure case management (including frequency and focus of sessions);
- determine program participation length;
- deliver the fourteen required program elements (tutoring, alternative schooling, paid and unpaid work experience, etc.);
- support youth voice and involvement;
- facilitate work experience, career pathways, employer participation; and
- track different outcomes and implement follow-up strategies.

[2] The 2022 RFP originally identified this population as "Homeless or Runaway Youth (Unaccompanied Youth)." The City now uses more strength-based language to describe youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

[3] The 2022 RFP identified this population as "Dropout youth." The City now uses more strength-based language to describe youth who are no longer attending school and have not received a secondary high school diploma or its recognized equivalent.

This framework details what the City expects of YWS providers and can be used to guide their proposal development and contracted service delivery plans. It remains a question for further implementation analysis to determine the extent to which they may have implemented these components consistently. In part, this brief offers recommendations to build on and refine these procurement guidelines, aiding the City in providing a more effective model of YWS enrollment, service delivery, and reporting requirements.

The YWS is Enrolling and Serving Large Numbers of Youth

Another success has been the large number of youth the YWS has enrolled across Los Angeles and the range of opportunities it has provided for them, including those related to career exploration, financial education, paid work experience, and/or connections with further education, training, and employment. Based on administrative data collected for this evaluation, the WIOA youth program enrolled approximately 5,597 youth (with 211 enrolling more than once) between July 15, 2022 and May 19, 2026, while the City- and County-funded HLAY program enrolled approximately 9,614 unique youth (with 2,196 enrolling more than once) from July 6, 2022 to May 29, 2026.[4] To narrow in on enrollment success, the City's workforce development system scorecard (for quarter two of PY 2025-2026) indicated that enrollment was at about 117 percent of the WIOA youth goal and 153 percent for the County-funded portion of HLAY services.

Additionally, the evaluation's preliminary interviews and survey data analysis suggest that youth are benefiting from these programs, both in terms of intermediate and longer-term outcomes. Current interviews with youth suggest that both WIOA and HLAY program youth have good relationships with their case managers, are finding meaningful work opportunities, are learning valuable life and work skills, and are receiving support in their education. Survey findings[5] from the current evaluation suggest that youth are experiencing positive outcomes in the following areas:

- **Work readiness.** At least ninety percent of survey respondents agreed with statements related to work readiness, including that they learned what is appropriate in a work setting (91%; HLAY participants n = 120; YSC participants n = 35) and learned new skills that will get them a job (90%; HLAY participants n = 116; YSC participants n = 35).
- **Goal setting.** At least eighty percent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with statements related to goal setting, including that they learned about education and training options that prepared them for a future job (87%; HLAY participants n = 112;

[4] As indicated above, analysis of the administrative data is preliminary and counts may still change.

[5] The findings below pertain to youth enrolled in HLAY and YSC programs. The YSC sample is small, and the survey data may reflect some response bias; findings are not representative of all participants.

YSC participants n = 36), explored jobs and careers that aligned with their interests (85%; HLAY participants n = 111, YSC participants n = 33), and have a clearer understanding of what they want to do in the future because of their program (81%; HLAY participants n = 108; YSC participants n = 31).

- **Connections to education and job training programs.** Forty percent of youth reported that HLAY or the YSC helped them enroll in a high school or GED program, community college or university, job training or certificate program, or other education/job training program (HLAY participants n = 46; YSC participants n = 21).

Cross-System Partnerships are Essential to Serving Youth

The 2022 YSC RFP also emphasized how providers needed to recognize, coordinate, and collaborate with various types of partners, including: the LA Unified School District (LAUSD), local community colleges, county agencies (e.g., the Departments of Public Social Services, Children and Family Services, Probation, and Mental Health), and other City agencies and services (e.g., the BusinessSource and FamilySource systems, the Department of Rehabilitation, and the Mayor's Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development). This community-based approach is meant to support youth outcomes by integrating community-wide efforts, removing barriers, and improving accountability and communication across the system. When it comes to partnerships that support recruitment and service delivery, these interviews and the literature review suggest that these types of partnerships within the YWS are generally quite strong. Current evaluation interviews, for example, highlighted how existing partnerships with LAUSD strengthen the system through the presence of pupil services and attendance counselors within YSCs where they work collaboratively with YSC case managers to review participant transcripts and identify K-12 educational needs. They also highlighted ways the program providers work with various service provider partners in their neighborhoods to recruit and refer participants, including co-locating staff at community colleges to better engage and support youth at these locations. These findings are further supported by the Horizons 32K (2024) and New Ways to Work (2022) reports, which highlight the work that occurred under the City's Performance Partnership Pilot (P3) initiative. The initiative supported public-private partnerships to help coordinate county-wide service delivery options for opportunity youth, and which resulted in new and strengthened partnerships between education, workforce development, and social service systems across the City.

Promoting Youth Voice Continues to be a Priority within the YWS

Previous studies and planning efforts, including the 2014 and 2021 HLAY reports, the 2019 LA College Promise study, the Horizons 32K strategic plan (2024), and the YDD Youth Metrics report (2024), have all highlighted the importance of creating ongoing opportunities for youth

feedback and leadership while incorporating Positive Youth Development approaches into service delivery. In response to some of these, the 2022 YWS RFP emphasized a youth-centered approach and called for the systematic incorporation of youth input into program design and service delivery. The 2022 RFP also established a YSC Advisory Council, which was implemented at the start of the current funding cycle. Together with youth representation on the HLAY Youth Steering Committee, these structures provide formal mechanisms for youth to inform programming.

This evaluation's interviews and survey data suggest that formal mechanisms for youth voice have expanded in recent years, including an operational Youth Advisory Council and youth representation on leadership bodies. EWDD also reported separately that, as of 2025, 40 youth leaders had presented recommendations related to service delivery. Through their interviews, youth themselves expressed appreciation for these opportunities. These included meaningful leadership opportunities, including serving on the YSC Advisory Council and supporting peers within their provider organizations. For example, one youth described leading an event which was as he said, "youth-led, youth-run." He added that "we developed it all by ourselves, you know, really being able to construct an entire event, which was, you know, an enriching experience" and one that was "very, very powerful for us." Others described mentoring peers, developing scholarship programs, and supporting fellow participants in additional ways. Nevertheless, in their interviews, some youth described how they, at times, felt like their input was not always fully considered by adults. These opportunities for youth leadership and youth voice are well supported in the literature and clearly appreciated by current youth. Ideally, the City can find more ways to continue and expand these opportunities for youth. As discussed later in the brief, this includes more intentionally engaging youth throughout their program experience and providing a more uniform experience across programs.

Recommendations

This section includes five broad recommendations for the YWS that are grounded in the evaluation's data collection and analysis activities, including a review of the literature. Each recommendation begins with observations of issues that the study team has observed with the YWS, followed by several potential solutions, which are divided into: near-term actions for upcoming procurement cycle, ongoing system improvements, and longer-term strategies.

Shifting attention towards service delivery, engagement, and barrier removal

Observations from the Analysis

One notable concern that steering committee members, City staff, and program providers raised in the evaluation interviews was that provider staff are often unable to keep youth engaged and actively participating in YWS services. As a result, these youth receive fewer of the services needed to help them achieve their education- and/or employment-related goals and for the City and service providers to meet funding-driven program performance measures.

There are several reasons why this might be happening. Some interview respondents noted that participants fail to continue with or enroll into WIOA youth services after completing a HLAY work experience, often because program participation is time-intensive and prevents them from maintaining other paid employment. In other words, some disengage due to lost income. Other interview respondents described how participants dropped out of services because they had multiple barriers to school or work (by design/intent) which the program was unable to fully address due to insufficient funds or connections to CBOs to provide supportive services. Past work by Fields and Soto (2021) also found that for HLAY, this disengagement may be happening because the structure of HLAY is contractually "designed to focus solely on enrollment and placement benchmarks" and "does not provide guidance on executing quality programming, instead prioritizing quantity." If so, then a focus on enrollment over services may be the issue. There may be other, deeper reasons for participants discontinuing services. As one staff member pointed out, accomplishing something for the first time for many youth may be intimidating.

Potential Solutions

- *Refocus attention in the upcoming procurement process on strategies for reducing youth barriers to work and school.* While the 2022 YSC RFP focused on providers identifying and enrolling youth with barriers (i.e., youth from high poverty areas and with specific barriers like being homeless/runaway, foster, dropout, justice involved, etc.), the next RFP could shift its emphasis towards developing and implementing specific strategies for addressing the barriers faced by the target populations providers plan to serve. First, the

City could identify service elements that are best suited to address different types of barriers, based on evidence-based practices and promising strategies identified in the literature (which SPR can also explore further in its upcoming final report). Second, the City may wish to lean into the expertise of its potential providers, having them propose additional approaches for addressing the barriers in the populations they plan to serve. Over the next procurement cycle there may also be opportunities to learn from current programs and to identify the most promising of these practices, especially through some of the approaches to collaboration outlined in the fourth recommendation below. The lessons learned by providers over this next procurement cycle are also important for furthering a growing field that suggests that providing workforce system services to individuals with multiple barriers to employment has considerable potential (DeFever et al., 2025).

- *Consider defining and collecting interim outcome measures designed to capture progress towards barrier abatement and youth empowerment.* For barrier abatement, these might include measures of work readiness assessments/scores that measure preparedness for work, completion of substance abuse treatment services, receipt of financial readiness training, completion of record expungement, or others measures of program participation that align with the barriers providers have identified. Measures of youth empowerment, which are discussed further in the YDD (2024) report, might include whether youth are developing social and interpersonal skills, building healthy relationships, becoming civically engaged, contributing to public service, or learning to advocate for their own well-being. Capturing these interim outcomes will provide an additional measure of youth progress and personal growth and may enable the City to assess the delivery of specific youth development-related staff training. The biggest challenges with introducing these measures involve: 1) finding ways to incorporate them into the City's already complicated and sometimes siloed data systems, 2) not further burdening provider staff with additional data collection responsibilities, and 3) not overburdening youth with too many assessments. While some changes may need to wait until data infrastructures can support further data collection and the City has an opportunity to explore different tools, some short-term solutions may be to tap providers to identify tools they are already using, considering introducing pre-/post-surveys into HLAY to capture progress, and to capture existing assessments scores or other progress measures into narrative or other progress reporting.
- *Consider ways to support and/or fund these additional supportive services or to free up restrictions (for the HLAY program) around current funding (since WIOA youth funding restrictions are federal in nature).* Several provider interviews specifically called out the

lack of, or limited funding and partnerships around housing support and housing partnerships. Providers also noted challenges in supporting transportation, substance use treatment services, and food assistance. These challenges were often attributed to insufficient HLAY or YSC funding levels and restrictions within WIOA funding guidelines that limited the use of funds for certain YSC supportive services. To the extent that the City can negotiate changes in funding restrictions in these areas, providers would appreciate the added flexibility. Where direct funding changes are not allowed due to federal WIOA restrictions, providers may need to leverage additional partnerships to connect youth with existing community resources and supports, which, in some cases may be best negotiated and addressed at the City level (see the fourth recommendation below for further discussion of this point). It may also be possible to implement certain solutions, such as developing a detailed referral list for providers or changes to certain type of HLAY funding, within the current procurement cycle. Others, like securing additional funds or developing new partnerships, such as those with additional housing providers, will likely require sustained effort throughout the next procurement cycle.

- *Support and encourage additional training for YSC and HLAY provider staff around Positive Youth Development strategies.* This is not a new recommendation for the YWS and has been highlighted extensively in past reports including the Citywide Youth Development Strategic Plan (2023) and the New Ways to Work (2022) report, among others. Increased training around Positive Youth Development is important for helping staff better identify and address youth concerns, helping to keep them engaged, and otherwise better identify the services the youth need for barrier abatement and retention, in addition to better supporting their educational and workforce system outcomes. While obtaining the funding for training may be difficult, doing so provides an opportunity to standardize service delivery approaches across providers. Furthermore, with the merger of EWDD and YDD into CID, the YWS will now be somewhat more closely aligned with the larger Youth Development System (as it exists serving all youth across the City, beyond just workforce system services). There may be new opportunities with this change in structure to more easily leverage training provided by and through other agencies, partners, or community organizations.

Reorienting the YWS to start with sector knowledge and career pathways

Observations from the Analysis

The YWS (under WIOA) delivers career services as a required program element but often does not begin with defined priority sectors that can anchor education, career exploration, work experience (including HLAY provided experiences for WIOA youth program participants), and

employer and educational partnerships. The need for choosing priority sectors is not a new challenge. In their HLAY System Review, Fields and Soto (2021) recommended that the City develop a coalition of employers, anchor institutions, and educational institutions committed to building a pipeline of opportunities leading to career pathways.

Reorienting the YWS to start with sector knowledge and career pathways would extend the shift already underway in the larger workforce system and match articulated pathway goals in opportunity youth roadmaps and other citywide plans. The City's 5-Year Path Forward (2025) document organizes the workforce system around "sector coalitions" in high-growth industries, in which career pathways are defined and mapped, and program services are designed around them. This approach directs the system to define characteristics of targeted sectors, including labor market information, employers, and current training programs, and to build supportive pathways to high-quality, living-wage jobs within these sectors. Similarly, the City's Horizons 32K report (2024) identifies career related education pathways for opportunity youth as a goal, operationalized through earn-and-learn models like paid internships, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeships, that lead to employment in high-growth, living-wage jobs. YDD's Citywide Youth Development Strategic Plan (2023) also names closely related goals to more paid internships, pathways to City employment, and increased partnerships with employers. The YWS would ideally orient itself within this larger sector aligned workforce system landscape as many of the goals outlined in related strategic plans support this reorientation.

While these elements of sector reorientation have been recommended before, several conditions likely contributed to stalled implementation. First, the YWS has historically operated outside the sector frameworks being developed for the larger workforce system, and there was no connection between recommendations naming sectors and the structures responsible for executing them. Second, there has not been a dedicated City-level team or associated staff at the YSCs with both the convening authority and adequate staffing to develop, maintain, and broker employer relationships at the sector level on behalf of youth providers, which has left employer development to individual providers. This can lead to competition among YSCs for the same employers and duplication of effort, especially if all YSC staff are engaging in this outreach. As one provider described this process of employer development, in an interview, it was a matter of reaching out to employers "one cold call at a time." Multiplied over 14 YSCs is a considerable effort. Third, interview respondents in this evaluation flagged that other major initiatives often competed with this approach for attention and time and they are not always aligned, which may explain why sector-focused recommendations did not gain traction. For example, one respondent indicated that "we've got too many people with too many different initiatives all trying to do the same thing, and they aren't aligned."

Two conditions are different now. The EWDD/YDD merger into CID creates a more unified structural home for cross-cutting youth workforce strategy. In addition, the 5-Year Path Forward (2025) identifies priority industry sectors and is developing adult workforce sector specialists that the youth system can leverage rather than replicate. The recommendations below assume CID will use these openings deliberately rather than reissuing sector language without an implementation backbone.

Potential Solutions

- *Reorient the YWS and services, such as work experience, training, and educational opportunities, to start from the City's priority sectors as identified in the 5-Year Path Forward: Government/Public Sector, Blue and Green Economy, Construction/ Infrastructure, Healthcare, Entertainment, Transportation, Performing Arts/Event.* There is an opportunity to position this as alignment with shifts already underway in the adult system and with recommendations in the Horizons 32K report, rather than as a new major systems change. During the upcoming procurement cycle, YSCs or HLAY programs could select one to two sectors to explore, while receiving technical support from the City's new sector specialists. Several youth respondents in our interviews independently named healthcare as their intended career field, and one Steering Committee member explicitly flagged healthcare, clean tech, and tech as growth industries the current system isn't connecting youth to. This tracks with national survey data showing 46 percent of Gen Z respondents interested in medicine or health-related fields, nearly triple the next-highest interests, engineering and science, at 18 percent each (NSHSS, 2024), suggesting that prioritizing alignment with the adult system's Healthcare & Social Assistance sector coalition would match both where the labor market is growing and where youth interest already lies. To ensure adequate representation and coverage across all eight sectors, the City should establish a clear mechanism for how providers should select or be assigned sectors, taking into account factors such as providers existing employer relationships, industry concentration within their service area, and career-related education pathways offered by nearby high schools, adult schools, and community colleges.
- *Leverage adult-system Business Service Representatives and the new sector specialist positions.* Rather than building parallel sector expertise within the youth system, the City should make clear connections to these new sector specialists and industry experts who will soon be operating, while also strengthening connections with existing BSRs at the WSCs. This will help to avoid duplicate employer outreach, where providers across both youth and adult systems, and across different YSCs, are left competing for the

same employers. Furthermore, interviews suggest that youth providers do not otherwise have capacity to build this sector knowledge or coordinate with employers. Moreover, sector pathways do not live only in the YWS. LAUSD CTE pathways already serve a substantial share of high school students, and one interviewee noted that work experience offered at YSCs often duplicates or arrives after what LAUSD has already provided. Lessons from high-quality summer youth employment programs (SYEPs) (Salimi & Garcia, 2025) suggest positioning YSCs as a complement to school-based internship programs over the medium term rather than a parallel pipeline.

- *Consider scaffolding this sector approach into differentiated pathways, rather than a single uniform model, so that exposure to work, work experience, and training varies by age, school status, readiness, and barriers.* One evaluation of HLAY's SYEP found that youth participants had strong connections to school but weaker ties to the labor market. Only 24 percent had worked in the previous six months, many reported limited knowledge of jobs or careers, and youth were at meaningfully different stages of career development (Moore et al., 2014). The evaluation also recommended that work readiness and financial literacy be delivered at two levels, one for 14- to 18-year-olds in high school and one for youth 19 and older, to reflect those different stages. This recommendation further aligns with the needs expressed by some providers in interviews where staff indicated they would like further clarity around how best to serve younger vs. older youth. Citywide data also reinforce that attainment matters independent of age: youth with less than a high school diploma have meaningfully lower employment rates than same-age peers who completed high school or some college (City of Los Angeles & Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative, 2024), suggesting differentiation should account for credential/attainment level alongside age and school status, rather than treating age as the only marker of career readiness. Through this differentiated approach, younger and/or in-school youth can enter at exposure and exploration tied to sector pathways, while older and/or out-of-school youth can connect to direct training, credentialing, and placement. This framing, if implemented in the upcoming procurement cycle, also avoids treating immediate unsubsidized employment as the default success measure for every participant (more on differentiated outcomes in the subsequent recommendation). It also addresses specific concerns raised in interviews about needing additional clarity around service delivery approaches for older vs. younger youth. One closely related consideration in this process for the City is to consider which outcomes and performance measure to consider for these differentiated youth. Younger youth who are more involved in school or older youth redirected towards it may not have particularly positive outcomes around employment. The LARCA

evaluation (2019) of a comparable Los Angeles career-pathways program for out-of-school youth, for example, found that participants had higher rates of re-enrollment in secondary education, credential attainment, and post-secondary enrollment, but lower short-term employment rates than the control group, a finding attributed to participants spending more time in education and training.

- *Build youth voice into sector pathway design at both system and participant levels, so that pathway selection compliments youth interests and aspirations rather than channeling participants into sectors selected on labor market data alone.* Doing so further supports the City's overall interest in supporting youth voice in the YWS and there are examples in the research where not doing so can hurt the system. The NYC Justice Corps evaluation (Cramer et al., 2019), for example, found that sector focus driven primarily by labor market data without participant input became misaligned with participants' career interests. While sector development will likely be driven primarily by labor market demand and career pathway opportunities, assessing youth interests and aligning them with those opportunities remains important. Doing so can help shape the development of specific career options for youth and enable youth leaders to communicate system priorities and opportunities back to their peers. Procurement requirements can establish expectations for youth engagement in sector design through existing youth leadership opportunities, while ongoing system-management activities can support consistent implementation through youth advisory structures, feedback mechanisms, and continuous improvement.
- *Continue to lead with an immediate work-and-earn hook.* As highlighted above in relation to barriers, many youth come to the YWS for opportunities to earn money and not necessarily because they want to commit to a career pathway. While this sector reorientation should reshape the system by lining up employers, placements and training in relevant sectors, it should not radically change the front-end experience for youth. As the City adopts a more-sector-focused approach, it should ensure that placements are sector-aligned by design, while still providing opportunities for youth to explore areas of interest in a broader way, recognizing their interest in earning money while being responsive to their interests in being placed in work experiences that are aligned with their career interests, skill sets, and the credentials they want to earn.
- *Include explicit assumptions about City-side and provider-side capacity around sector-based development, rather than treating staffing as a downstream detail.* Implementing a sector-based orientation requires both City and provider capacity that should be named directly in the next procurement cycle. On the City side, this likely includes

brokering connections between YSCs and adult-system sector specialists and BSRs, building networks with employers and maintaining an employer database, and supporting providers in testing different sector approaches. Even lower-cost versions, whereby the City leverages existing adult-system staff will require negotiated access between staff, cross-organization agreements, and someone at CID who owns the coordination. On the provider side, sector exploration and mechanisms for capturing youth voice (as outlined in the recommendation on youth voice above) draw on case management and program time that providers already report being unable to fund with current administrative caps. Fields and Soto (2021) noted that LA's 15 percent administrative cap is well below comparable cities (Philadelphia 30 percent, NYC 25 percent). If the City wants providers to take on sector-aligned employer development, anchored career pathway planning, and be responsive to youth feedback without additional administrative funding or Citywide support, the realistic outcome is that this recommendation will stall in the same ways prior versions have. The next procurement should pair the sector reorientation with explicit assumptions about where the staffing, both at CID and within provider organizations, will come from. If formal integration into sector coalitions is not feasible in this procurement cycle, the City can still direct providers toward the growth sectors identified in the 5-Year Path Forward by centralizing labor market data, coordinating employer outreach, and building informal referral relationships with WorkSource Center (WSC) sector specialists.

Determining HLAY's functions and implementing a tiered services model

Observations from the Analysis

Based on interview respondent feedback, the HLAY program is currently being asked to serve as a universal engagement tool (e.g., introducing youth to the workforce system), an income source for low-income youth, a work exposure tool, and as the entry point to career pathways, all under a single program design. The program delivers genuine value in the first three but visibly struggles in the fourth, and the current performance framework captures neither side well as it does not credit HLAY for the durable, non-employment outcomes it produces, and it does not surface where the career-pathway promise is breaking down.

Currently, the system delivers value as an engagement and income access tool. Providers report more demand than they can serve. Beyond participation numbers, rigorous evaluations of comparable paid work experience programs document durable benefits that go well beyond wages or placement: reductions in violence-related arrests, particularly for higher-risk youth (Davis & Heller, 2020; Heller, 2022), and gains in self-reported job readiness, social skills, and

college aspirations (Modestino & Paulsen, 2019). These are outcomes that are not captured in the current performance framework.

Although the program can recruit and engage youth, the quality of work experience varies across the program and opportunities to connect to career pathways are limited. Placements include retail and clerical work that are not aligned to priority sectors or career pathways leaving youth with few opportunities to transition into employment after placement hours end. Without differentiated program tracks, eligibility rationale, and appropriately matched service intensity designed to scaffold this program's work experiences, the aforementioned different functions of the program, become diffuse and are difficult to differentiate from one another.

Another important challenge is participant handoff. In this evaluation's interviews, many respondents noted that the problem point for HLAY was with the handoff from initial work experience to either other workforce system services or further employment opportunities with growth potential. One provider, for example, described youth falling off after finishing their work experience hours because of a lack of a direct pathway from this work experience to permanent employment or quality jobs. As a City staff member explained: "The number one problem with the mismatch of the YSC System and HLAY and all these work experience programs is that they never move beyond work experience. We always start with this great career exploration experience, or we have this thing that's going to expose the kids… and that's all well and good. [But what's powerful is when] the students actually…move beyond that and build on the skills that they are already building in their career pathways." One youth respondent described the post-work experience moment as "being left in the dark" and there being no follow-up after that point. Another youth described the problem being that the initial work experience was not one that led easily into more meaningful work. This youth said that the job was described as something "grander" than it was, when in reality, it involved "greeting people in a stadium."

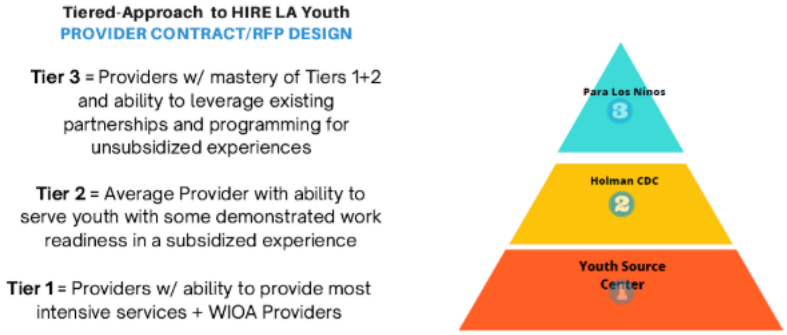
Compounding these issues is lack of coordination between HLAY and YSCs, and a performance framework that doesn't capture what the program actually delivers. As one City staff member described things, there is no bridge between HLAY and the YSCs; there are limited incentives for the two programs to work together, little guidance on how they should coordinate, and few resources needed to connect the two programs together. At the same time, coordination is generally informal in nature and largely left to the discretion of individual providers, rather than being specifically directed by the City, beyond a general expectation that providers prioritize opportunity youth and other high-barrier youth. The amount of data captured on HLAY is limited to baseline data, enrollment, and various stages of completion and there is no easy way to link HLAY and WIOA youth data to measure how youth move across these two programs.

Finally, while solutions to address these challenges have been introduced in previous procurement cycles, including the tiered system model (Fields & Soto, 2021) they were not operationalized. Several key factors may have contributed. Prior strategic planning recommendations specified the concept of tiering (where workforce specialization and work opportunities are progressively narrowed to more specific youth as they progress in their career exploration process), but did not attach tier definitions, intake and assessment protocols, service expectations, or fidelity standards, leaving providers and the City with no operational pathway. Additionally, HLAY's contracting and cost-reimbursement structure, with performance measures primarily by enrollment and job placement numbers, does not currently accommodate cost levels by tier. The current model does not differentiate costs by service intensity, which means the cost to serve youth with higher barriers is absorbed by programs. While data systems have the capability to capture tier assignments or differentiate outcomes by tier to monitor this model, it is recorded inconsistently by providers. Without specifying tier definitions, contracting changes, and performance and data tracking redesign, recommendations to address the challenges above may stall.

Potential Solutions

- *Re-introduce a tiered system of service delivery for the HLAY program.* While tiered services models have been previously recommended, as noted above, there has not been much, if any, implementation of one. The 2021 HLAY System Review (Fields & Soto), shown in Exhibit 1 below, recommends one such model and Objective 31A of YDD's Citywide Youth Development Strategic Plan (2024) also commits to a tiered system in principle where "youth receive quality work experience based on their skillsets." Furthermore, research literature supports tiering to match service intensity to youth needs, including heavier support for high barrier youth and lighter touch services for youth who need less support (Davis & Heller, 2020; Heller, 2022). Another analysis by Ross & Kazis (2016) also identifies tiered job matching as a hallmark of higher-quality programs.

Exhibit 1. Recommended Tiered Youth Work Experience Model



- *Establish clear tier definitions.* One potential reason a tiered system has been difficult to implement is a lack of clarity around the structure. For that reason, the City should develop these tier definitions in coordination with key stakeholders (e.g., Steering Committee members and partner staff) for the upcoming procurement cycle and then make these definitions visible to providers and partners, creating accessible versions for youth that categorize the types of work experiences offered, their purpose, and the level of autonomy. One basis for the plan is the model introduced by Fields and Soto (2021) which recommended a three-tiered system with varying levels of service intensity. The basic structure involves placing: a majority of participants—who are newer to the workforce, typically younger, and have less defined employment goals—in the first tier; a smaller group in the second tier—those with some work experience and demonstrated readiness; and a still smaller group of typically older youth with clearer goals who are seeking quality jobs and career pathway opportunities in the third tier. Tier classifications should be tied to factors such as participant barrier level, educational attainment, work experience level, assessed interest and youth readiness. More effective assessment of these factors may be supported by enhanced staff training in Positive Youth Development frameworks, as noted above. For instance, foundational jobs, where the purpose is to adjust to a workplace and how it functions (e.g., schedule, taking direction, basic communication) may be good for someone with no work experience, while credential building jobs, where youth earn a credential or participate in structured training to build technical competency may be better suited for youth who are career focused/have clearer idea of desired career path.
- *Develop HLAY program performance measures that match HLAY's actual functions and populations.* Standard WIOA employment metrics may understate progress for the youth HLAY serves, particularly opportunity youth and in-school youth in their first work experience, because education and employment outcomes move on different timelines

(Palmer & Preston, 2026). The City should consider complementing traditional employment and education outcomes with intermediate indicators for the populations HLAY serves. Performance measures include both employment and education indicators, but this framework may still understate progress of youth who will not complete a credential within a year of exit. As noted above, paid work experience may produce measurable benefits in domains other than workforce, including violence reduction and behavioral changes, particularly for higher-risk youth (Davis & Heller, 2020; Heller, 2022), and gains in job readiness, social skills, community engagement, and college aspirations (Modestino & Paulsen, 2019). Providers and City staff in our interviews describe this gap. One HLAY provider identified skill development and gains in participant confidence as the most meaningful outcomes of the program and noted that they are not reflected anywhere in the current performance framework. Further, a City staff member described the resource-intensive work of re-enrolling out-of-school youth in school and said, "We don't really get any credit for it." The City's Positive Youth Development framework already names relevant outcomes and they could anchor the performance framework for HLAY, paired with intermediate milestones such as skills gains, supportive connections, referrals, and engagement after exit. The 2024 YDD report outlined a measurement approach that links youth program metrics to a Positive Youth Development framework, ensuring that youth participation and success are assessed across domains like youth assets, agency, contribution, and supportive environments, alongside department capacity. It emphasized tracking not just outputs but meaningful intermediate or short-term outcomes, such as belonging, confidence, relationships, goal setting, and youth voice to better understand how HLAY and YSC programs contribute to youth growth and well-being. Over time, these measures could become a core component of performance management and continuous improvement.

- *Implement a common identifier for linking HLAY and WIOA youth programs.* This data element does not currently exist, which makes it difficult for City staff, and potentially provider staff, to track the ways in which youth are cross-referred and the services that they may have received across programs. Introducing a common identifier during the next procurement cycle would support cross-program tracking, improve coordination, and lay the foundation for more integrated data systems in the long-term. While this is something that can be easily introduced, operationalizing it may require some legal and technical decisions the City hasn't yet made, including what notice or consent is needed to link records across systems; where the identifier lives and how it is applied to both HLAY and CalJOBS entries; and who is responsible for maintaining it as youth move between providers. Our interviews already describe case managers entering the same

documents into multiple disconnected systems, which a poorly implemented identifier could worsen. Ideally this could be done at the City level through a unique identifier like an SSN.

Creating ways for City and YWS providers to increase collaboration

Observations from the Analysis

While the core components of the YWS are listed in the RFP, the City relies on a largely decentralized model in which YSC and non-YSC HLAY providers are responsible for designing and implementing key program elements as a condition of funding. For example, the RFP defines the required components and expectations that funded programs must address, but it generally does not prescribe how providers should operationalize or implement those components. On the one hand, this system allows providers to customize services based on their strengths, their knowledge of participants and providers in their communities, and their own partnership networks. This process places significant responsibility on individual providers who may have limited administrative and staffing capacity, knowledge of Citywide operations, and financial support for developing tools and procedures across a wide range of services. Furthermore, having each provider develop each aspect of their programs has inefficiencies and opens the system up to variability in operations across providers.

These sentiments are reflected in this evaluation's interviews and in past reports. One interview respondent, for example, noted how system youth frequently comment on how the YSCs need to increase collaboration to better showcase the range of services that they have to offer. Providers in their interviews also raised concerns about not being able to provide certain service delivery components or the inefficiency of their doing so. As noted in earlier recommendations, this is particularly true when it comes to employer partnerships and partnerships with service providers, such as housing providers, that may need to operate Citywide, and for which it would be inefficient for local providers to all develop when it could be done centrally. The 2021 HLAY System Review (Fields & Soto) further indicated that the execution of the HLAY program was found to be left solely to the interpretation of program providers, and which underscored the need for more inclusive and structured recruitment approaches. Overall, existing funding constraints underscore the need for more efficient, coordinated systems that can maximize impact without duplicating effort.

Together, these conditions point to an opportunity for the City to take a more centralized leadership role while still drawing on provider expertise to improve program consistency, strengthen infrastructure, and better support both providers and youth across the system.

Potential Solutions

- *Increase collaboration and centralization of employer engagement to streamline service delivery and expand job opportunities.* Interview respondents broadly advocated for the City to take the lead in developing relationships with larger employers and those working across City regions, citing efficiency and reducing competition between programs "barking up the same tree" for the same opportunities. Establishing the City as the primary point of contact for Citywide employers would allow providers to focus on cultivating relationships with smaller, neighborhood-based businesses, reducing staff time required for employer outreach and potentially supporting a more equitable distribution of job opportunities across providers. Providers could, theoretically, play this role by working with a particular employer, but the City may still need to assign such roles as well as make sure providers would have the capacity to take on such a role. Over the longer term, the City could operationalize sector coalitions named in the 5-Year Path Forward plan, and/or build a shared employer database and centralized outreach infrastructure that providers can draw from. The City could also leverage and expand existing employer partnerships within the adult workforce system to connect providers with new opportunities and strengthen alignment across workforce programs. Lastly, interview findings and prior recommendations from the HLAY 2021 report suggest that employers should be engaged beyond job placement partners and involved as strategic partners in workforce development, helping to inform training, guide sector-based strategies, and build career pathways through coordinated partnerships with HLAY and YSC providers.
- *To reduce the recruitment burden placed on individual providers around recruitment and to promote more equitable access across communities, the City should consider developing a centralized recruitment and outreach strategy.* One SPR report (2025), for example, recommended engaging youth using social media campaigns and encouraging youth participants to share their personal experiences as a strategy for marketing and outreach to other youth. Additionally, this report suggests that text-based communication may be more effective than traditional phone-based outreach. A coordinated, Citywide outreach strategy—potentially housed within CID—could address these needs by standardizing messaging, expanding recruitment efforts, clarifying consent procedures on forms across WIOA and HLAY programs, and clarifying roles between CID and program providers. This approach could also promote more equitable outreach across communities while reducing duplication of effort among providers. While establishing a coordinated, Citywide outreach strategy may be achieved in the medium-term, the City could encourage YSC providers to incorporate text-based

communications and social media outreach in the upcoming procurement cycle. Further, efforts to improve outreach and enrollment should also prioritize consistent follow-up with youth who express interest or submit applications, including clearer youth-facing messaging and transparent application status tracking.

- *The City should take a more active role in developing standardized tools and procedures for providers.* These might include a common individualized development plan (IDP) template, standardized assessment instruments measuring short term gains (e.g., a work readiness assessment that includes identification of barriers and could serve as the basis of an IDP and mechanism for measuring improvements), and protocols for ongoing case management and follow-up services. In addition to improving consistency and evaluability of services across program providers, these tools could support better documentation, monitoring, and continuous improvement in the long-term. Establishing clearer expectations combined with technical assistance would also ensure that existing provider expectations are well defined and implemented consistently. Further, during interviews, one provider recommended creating a community of practice for providers, specifically direct service providers (such as case managers) to share best practices and strategize on challenges—an approach that could be implemented in the near-term. While these tools may require medium-term development and refinement, pilot sites could co-design and pilot initial versions in the short-term.

Finding ways to increase funding to providers, especially around staff wages

Observations from the Analysis

Providers and system leaders reported in interviews that current funding levels make it difficult for providers to offer sufficient supportive services, collect and track data, engage employers, and to maintain competitive, livable staff wages. With limited funding, providers struggle to balance program quality and high enrollment—which both require significant staff time—with sustainable staff salaries. One interview respondent reflected on the challenge of asking for a living wage for their participants when their staff are also struggling financially. Notably, a report by the Nonprofit Finance Fund (2025) found that "workforce development providers struggle with providing the job quality for their own teams that they hope the youth they serve could one day have." In other words, low wages hurt staff retention, which in turn impacts program quality. At the same time, a YDD report (2024) on metrics noted that "the most commonly cited barrier to collecting and analyzing metrics, measures, and outcomes of youth development programs was a lack of resources and expertise to do so, including appropriate number of staffing and funding."

Potential Solutions

- *Identify sources of additional funding to enhance services, staffing levels, and/or staff wages.* Interviews and SPR's literature review surfaced some possible ways to increase funding for the YWS. A system stakeholder suggested that the City leverage other sources of funding that often go underutilized, such as co-enrolling youth in Department of Rehabilitation programming to offer more supportive services for youth. The 2025 Nonprofit Finance Fund report suggested that "the City—together with the County—should collaboratively advocate for state funding that would allow for increases in per-participant budgets and higher indirect rate coverage." While some funding opportunities could be identified and pursued in the upcoming procurement cycle, increasing system resources will likely require a long-term strategy involving state and regional partners.
- *Make contracting procedures easier and more seamless*. The City may want to prioritize executing contracts in a more timely manner. Providers reported in interviews that late contracts tie up their funds and increase administrative costs. In addition, the 2025 Nonprofit Finance Fund report recommended that the City "provide up-front payments (rather than reimbursements) to providers." Optimally, improved contract timing could be incorporated into the next procurement cycle, with other changes potentially more long term.
- *Improve data infrastructure to reduce provider burden and strengthen program performance and accountability*. Interview respondents consistently reported that data collection and reporting requirements require substantial staff time and can be challenging to manage. Providers requested additional support in the next procurement cycle, including more hands-on training, expanded onboarding for data and reporting systems, and greater access to real-time participant data reports, or at least ones responsive to their need for tracking overall progress, so that data entry errors can be identified and corrected more efficiently. Providers also expressed a desire for a way to more easily monitor program information (e.g., what services are underutilized or what performance outcomes are met). Implementing user-friendly dashboards would allow both City staff and providers to monitor service delivery, identify implementation challenges, and target support where it is most needed. As part of the upcoming procurement cycle, the City could also review reporting requirements to distinguish essential data elements from those that are less critical and streamline data collection accordingly. Over the longer term, the City could explore connecting existing data systems through application programming interfaces (APIs) or other forms of systems integration, reducing the need for duplicate data entry across multiple databases. The City could also consider centralizing certain administrative and reporting functions to

increase efficiency, reduce duplication, and allow providers to devote more time to direct service delivery.

Appendix 1: Bibliography

Note: Not all articles listed in the bibliography below are cited within this document but may have been used as part of background research and will be included in the full annotated bibliography in the final report.

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Appendix 2: Final Report Outline

I. Introduction

- Short purpose statement
- YWS overview and logic model
- Evaluation goals and research questions
- Data collection activities (adult and youth interviews, youth survey, administrative data, and literature review) and limitations
- Overview of the report

II. Inputs and System Structure

- Public agency, education, employer, and CBO partnership successes and limitations
- Involvement of youth voice and opportunities for expansion
- YWS (YSC/WIOA youth and HLAY program) funding and procurement strengths
- Limitations around timing, funding levels, and consistency across programs

III. Enrollment, Case Management, and Barrier Abatement

- Outreach and Enrollment
    - Enrollment numbers over time (and relative to goals when available) for WIOA and HLAY participant demographics
    - Reasons provided by adults and youth around program participation and support for successful outreach strategies
    - Administrative data on, and adult and youth assessments of, participant application flow and points of attrition, including: application, eligibility determination, program selection, acceptance, and pre-program participation
- Case management and youth engagement
    - Admin data on assessments, IEPs, career counseling, and co-enrollment in other programs and services
    - Adult and youth assessments of case management services and staff interactions, including communication, goal setting, referrals, and general engagement best practices
    - Need for additional training and support especially around Positive Youth Development strategies and helping to identify and address youth needs
- Barriers and Supportive Services
    - Priority population demographic information (e.g., opportunity youth, foster youth, justice-impacted youth, youth experiencing homelessness, etc.)
    - Admin data on delivery of supportive services

- Adult and youth assessments of areas of met and unmet participant needs
- Other successes and challenges in addressing participant barriers

IV. Education, Training, and Career Services and Participant Outcomes

- Education, Training, and Career Services
  - Admin data on education, training, and work-related services (for WIOA youth), broken out (when possible) by demographic groups and priority populations
  - Adult and youth assessments of these services including their alignment with participant interests, career goals , job opportunities, and labor market demand
- Work Experiences
  - Admin data on apprenticeships and other work experiences for WIOA youth, broken out (when possible) by demographic groups and priority populations
  - Admin data on HLAY progress, broken out (when possible) by demographic groups and priority populations
  - Admin data on HLAY and WIOA youth program co-enrollment, including order of enrollment, broken out (when possible) by demographics
  - Adult and youth assessments of work experience services, including the quality of the opportunities and the alignment with career goals/interest, fit along career pathways, and labor market demand in key sectors
- Educational Completion/Employment Placement
  - Administrative data on performance measures (if available, and may need to be pulled from external sources, like WIPS)
  - Additional information (if available) around types of placements
  - Youth assessments of future plans and general program satisfaction
  - Adult assessments of overall participant-level successes and factors that contribute to these successes

V. System-Level Outcomes

- Implementation of prior recommendations and alignment with strategic goals
  - Adult assessment of how the YWS has aligned and achieved past strategic planning recommendations and goals (e.g., tiered systems, cross-system collaboration, etc.) and which ones it still needs to strive for
  - Factors influencing successful achievement or limited implementation towards these recommendations and goals
- Data systems and performance measurement
  - Current data systems and tracking capacity

    - Adult perceptions of performance metrics including those that are difficult to meet and factors affecting their ability to track/meet any metrics
    - Additional insights around data system limitations
    - Opportunities to improve data collection, integration, and use
- Other assessments of overall system-level successes and challenges and factors that contribute to these successes

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

- Summary of key findings across all areas of implementation
- Key recommendations for changes and improvements to the YWS

7.

DATE: July 14, 2026

TO: Workforce Development Board (WDB)

FROM:

SUBJECT: **3rd Quarter WIOA and HireLA Performance Presentation**

REQUESTED ACTION:

BACKGROUND:

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND:

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

- Item 7 - 3rd Quarter WIOA and HireLA Performance Presentation

Youth Workforce System FY 25/26 - Q3 Performance Update

WIOA Youth and Hire LA's Youth

Workforce Development Board Youth Council
Tuesday, July 14, 2026

Community Investment Department

Agenda

1. Background
    a. WIOA YouthSource Center
    b. Hire LA's Youth
    c. PY 2025-26 Funding
2. Q3 Performance
    a. WIOA Program Performance Outcomes
    b. Hire LA's Youth Program Performance
    c. Hire LA's Youth Worksite
3. Q&A

Background - Program Structure





WIOA YouthSource Center

- Federally-funded educational and career readiness services for disconnected young Angelenos, ages 16 to 24
- PY25-26 funding covered 14 YouthSource Centers (YSCs)

Hire LA's Youth

- City General Fund and County-funded paid, work-based learning services for young Angelenos, ages 14 to 24, providing work-readiness instruction, career exploration, and on-the-job work experience
- PY25-26 funding covered 21 total organizations - 14 YSCs and 7 non-YSCs

Background - PY 2025-26 Funding

Program	Funding	Service Goal
WIOA Youth	$11,550,000	2,100
Hire LA's Youth	$7,797,374	2,091
Hire LA's Youth - City GF	$3,177,044	831
Hire LA's Youth - County Youth@Work	$4,620,330	1,260

Q3 Performance - WIOA Youth

Performance Measure	Annual Goal	Q1	Q2	Q3
Participants Served	2,100	969	1,289	1,575
Enrolled in Education or Training	116	41	59	97
Education/Employment Rate 2nd Qtr. After Exit	72%	80%	77%	69%
Credential Attainment Rate	58%	46%	66%	76%
Measurable Skills Gain Rate	61%	21%	16%	19%

Q3 Performance - Hire LA's Youth

Program	Annual Goal	Q1	Q2	Q3	Cumulative Performance	Finishers
HLAY GF	831	346	182	192	720 (87%)	631 (88%)
HLAY County	1,260	613	350	80	1,043 (83%)	804 (77%)
TOTAL	2,091	959	795	272	1,763 (84%)	1,435 (81%)

Q3 Performance - Hire LA's Youth

Industry	# of Worksites
Educational Services	28
Health Care and Social Assistance - *Healthcare & Social Assistance*	17
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation - *Entertainment, Motion Picture, and Sound Recording* - *Performing Arts, Spectator Sports, and Related Industries*	16
Retail Trade	18
Public Administration - *Public Sector*	10

Q3 Performance - Hire LA's Youth

Industry	# of Worksites
Accommodation and Food Services - *Performing Arts, Spectator Sports, and Related Industries*	7
Other Services (except Public Administration)	22
All Other Industries - *Biosciences* - *Blue & Green Economy* - *Construction*	12

Discussion - Next Steps

- Continued need for data tracking of Angelenos, ages 18 to 24, served by WorkSource Center System
- Continued development of CID ability to report on hours completed by HLAY Finishers
- Support HLAY agencies with worksite approval and participant placement
- Better alignment of HLAY worksites with 5-Year Strategic Plan

PY 2026-27 Youth Funding Update

Program	PY 2025-26	PY 2026-27	Variance
SYEP/City GF	$ 3,177,044 *831 slots*	$ 1,564,400 *428 slots*	$ (1,612,644) *403 slots lost*
County Youth@Work	$ 8,308,779 *1,260 slots*	$ 3,163,505 *739 slots**	$ (5,145,274) *521 slots lost*
HIRE LA TOTAL (City + County)	$11,485,823 *2,091 slots*	$5,079,300 *1,167 slots*	$ (6,406,523) *924 slots lost*

8.

DATE: July 14, 2026

TO: Workforce Development Board (WDB)

FROM:

SUBJECT: **Peer Homeless System Navigation Program Presentation**

REQUESTED ACTION:

BACKGROUND:

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND:

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

- Item 8 - YDD_WDB_Peer_Homeless_Program_Navigator_Presentation_7.14.26 - Presentation_2sl

Peer Homeless System Navigator Pilot (PHSP)

Experiential Evaluation Overview

Tuesday, July 14, 2026

Community Investment Department &
The Guillen Group



Agenda

1. Program Structure and Goals
2. Evaluation Approach
3. Key Findings and Impact
    i. Overall Evaluation Insights
    ii. Peer Navigator Experience
    iii. Staff Experience
3. Recommendations
4. Q&A

Program Structure and Goals

- **Purpose**: Peer-to-peer pilot designed primarily to address youth homelessness and housing insecurity in Los Angeles.
- **Management**: Managed by YDD, with EWDD support, and funded by the U.S. Department of Labor.
- **Participants**: Employs 40 low-income LACCD students, ages 18–25, with lived experience of housing insecurity or other barriers.
- **Paid Role**: Peer Navigators work up to 360 paid hours at $25/hour.

- **Program Goals**: Increase youth access to services, build trust through peer support, identify system gaps, and strengthen navigators' job readiness and leadership skills.
- **Service Goal**: Each navigator was expected to connect approximately 30 peers to support services, for a total goal of 1,200 youth served during a 21-month period. (PHSN enrolled 40 peer navigators (100% of goal) and provided support referrals to 684 youth (57% of goal) during a compressed 9-month period.
- **Supports**: Services include referrals to academic support, housing assistance, food, employment, financial stability aid, mental health resources, and public benefits.

Methodology

Evaluation design: Mixed Methods

Framework: Positive Youth Development (Enabling Environment, Youth Asset, Youth Agency, and Youth Contribution)

Data collection methods: Survey, Interviews, Testimonials, Observations

- 5 peer navigator in-person interviews
- 5 peer navigator virtual interviews
- 2 staff interviews
- 18 survey responses

Data Analysis Approach: Survey data were analyzed using quantitative survey responses and interview responses were coded to identify common themes.

Limitations: Findings are based on self-reported data, which may introduce bias, and the short program timeframe limits ability to measure long-term outcomes. Interviews of youth who received support from peer navigators was beyond the scope of this evaluation.

Overall Evaluation Insights

1. **Peer model worked**: Strengthened confidence, leadership, communication, job readiness, and trust.
2. **Stability improved**: Supported peer navigators with income, school retention, and resource access.
3. **Implementation varied**: Limited structure, training, and coordination affected consistency.
4. **System gaps remained**: Housing, mental health, and referral barriers limited long-term support.
5. **Strong potential**: With stronger infrastructure, partnerships, training, and data tracking, the model could have greater impact.

Peer Navigator Experience: Strong Overall Results

Satisfaction: 88.9% were very satisfied or satisfied with the program.

Career Interest: 77.7% said the program increased their interest in homeless or human services careers.

Job Readiness: 88.8% said the program increased their job and career readiness.

Next Steps: 72.2% planned to continue with both school and work after the program.



Economic Stability and Well-Being

School Stability: 83.3% agreed the program helped them stay enrolled in school.

Basic Needs: 83.3% agreed the program helped them meet basic needs.

Financial Stress: 72.2% agreed the program reduced financial stress.

Purpose/Belonging: 88.9% reported increased purpose; 83.3% reported improved well-being and stronger community/belonging.



Growth, Trust, and Peer Support

Lived Experience: Navigators' lived experience helped build trust and relatability with youth.

Skill Growth: Navigators reported growth in confidence, communication, leadership, and professionalism.

Meaningful Work: Navigators felt rewarded when they helped youth access resources or move closer to stability.

Peer Model: The peer-to-peer approach made support feel more approachable and credible.



Service Navigation and Implementation Lessons

Navigator Role: Work included outreach, resource research, referrals, follow-up, and youth engagement.

Youth Needs: Common needs included financial support, job search, food assistance, scholarships, and housing-related support.

Access Barriers: Youth faced difficulty navigating systems, finding the right services, and meeting eligibility requirements.

Benefits App: Helpful for identifying resources and eligibility, but feedback is being shared regarding privacy concerns, sensitive questions, and referral-tracking limitations.

Outreach Lessons: Outreach worked best when clear, low-pressure, one-on-one, and trust-based.



Staff Experience: What Worked

Staff Role: Staff provided administrative, operational, and supportive functions.

Navigator Growth: Staff observed growth in communication, confidence, and professional skills.

Peer Model: Staff identified the peer-to-peer model as a core strength.

Cohort Model: Group connection helped build community and peer support, when actively facilitated.



Staff Experience: What Needs Strengthening

Role Clarity: Staff experiences varied, pointing to the need for clearer role definitions and coordination.

Early Structure: Lack of structure early on created uncertainty about expectations, roles, and outreach strategies.

Resource Gaps: Housing and mental health resource gaps limited navigators' ability to fully support students.

Communication: Inconsistent communication and unclear outreach expectations affected implementation.



Recommendations - Part I

Strengthen Program Structure

- Clarify roles, expectations, workflows, and site-level responsibilities.
- Consider expanding program hours and duration if the pilot continues.

Improve Training and Outreach

- Provide practical training on outreach, communication, and job readiness.
- Use team-based outreach to increase confidence, safety, and engagement.

Build Peer Connection

- Create regular opportunities for teamwork, in-person connection, and shared problem-solving.

Recommendations - Part II



Support Peer Navigators

- Provide case management, basic needs support, and career resources to improve stability and retention.



Improve Service Coordination

- Strengthen referral tracking, follow-up processes, and partner coordination to better measure outcomes.



Enhance the Benefits Navigator App

- Share feedback with the app administrator on privacy, sensitive questions, referral tracking, and resource navigation features.

Thank you!

Q&A

9.

DATE: July 14, 2026

TO: Workforce Development Board (WDB)

FROM:

SUBJECT: **LA County Youth@Work Allocation Verbal Update**

REQUESTED ACTION:

BACKGROUND:

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND:

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

No Attachments Available